

## **DOCKET ITEM 06-13**

### **Alleys in R-8 Zones**

**ISSUE:** Should new developments in R-8 zones where alleys exist be required to locate all parking in the rear yard and be required to have vehicular access to the development through the use of the alley network?

**RECOMMENDATION:** Add parking and loading development standards to the Municipal Code where new standards would require all parking to be provided in the rear portion of the yard and vehicular access would be taken from the alley.

**BACKGROUND:** Historically, neighborhoods where alley access has been available have developed in an urban residential pattern. Residential patterns in these areas are characterized by more curb space and on-street parking, safer pedestrian oriented corridors, and homes that front streets without garages or parking areas located between homes and the street. There is currently a loop-hole in the Municipal Code that allows development in R-8 zones with alley access to develop in a suburban style, allowing neighborhood character and quality to decline where the alley connections are not utilized.

Adding requirements mandating the utilization of existing alley networks in R-8 zoning districts will bring the zone's development standards in line with the City's Comprehensive Plan, the guiding document for City development. In the *Community Design Element* of the Plan, Policy CD-13 speaks directly to new developments in established residential neighborhoods. The policy states that new projects should draw on elements of existing development to reflect the site planning and scale of existing areas in placement of structures and location of entries. Current development standards in the Municipal Code do not reflect this policy. Current standards allow new development to change the character of established residential neighborhoods by allowing the placement of vehicles, garages, and driveways between residences and streets.

In addition, allowing such placement of vehicles disrupts other established services in neighborhoods including curb space for on-street parking and current pedestrian corridors. In regards to streets and sidewalks, Policy CD-57 of the *Community Design Element* establishes policy where "safety measures should include generous separation of cars and pedestrians, reducing the number of curb cuts and driveways" in new developments where pedestrian-oriented safety is a first priority. Right now, R-8 zones with alleys reflect this policy. Pedestrians are safer in these areas as there are less curb cuts which allows for more on-street parking and the creation of a safety barrier between pedestrians and moving vehicles. By requiring parking to be located in the rear of yards and access to parking areas via alleys, this policy will continue to be enforced. By not establishing parking and loading requirements, new developments have the opportunity to create additional curb cuts and driveway spaces between homes and the street which negatively impacts current pedestrian safety levels and reduces on-street parking spaces.

#### Code Language Examples

Other residential zones as well as Urban Overlay Districts have established parking and loading development standards for areas with alleys, providing exemplary language to evaluate as part of this process. Examples state that 1) all parking shall be provided in the rear yard when alley

access is available, 2) that all parking shall be provided in the rear portion of the yard, and access shall be taken from the alley, and 3) no surface parking shall be located between a building and the front property line and that parking lots and garages shall be accessed from alleys when available.

#### Developed and Undeveloped Alley Right-of-Ways

An important note in this discussion is that not all alley right-of-ways have been developed, for example in areas of Kennydale, Highlands and Renton Hill neighborhoods. It is recommended that new code language is directed to areas where developed alley networks exist as in the North Renton neighborhood.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE:** A zoning code amendment establishing development standards that require all parking to be provided in the rear portion of the yard and vehicular access would be taken from the alley would not conflict with goals, objectives, and policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

**CONCLUSION:** Adding development regulations will maintain or improve established neighborhood character, maintain safe pedestrian environments, keep valued on-street parking spaces, and utilize the City's entire street network.